

Message Text

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ACTION ITF-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 SR-02 ORM-01 VO-03 SCA-01

AID-05 H-02 DODE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 PRS-01 PA-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PM-03 SSO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05

IO-10 EUR-12 INSE-00 IGA-01 /081 W

----- 021422

O 050441Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2470

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC REP GUAM IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1827

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, VS, SN

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN SINGAPORE

REFS: (A) STATE 104057; (B) SINGAPORE 1820;

(C) SINGAPORE 1819; (D) SINGAPORE 1691

(E) SINGAPORE 1649

SUMMARY: GOS NOW PROVISIONING 25 VESSELS CARRYING 3710 REFUGEES WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO LEAVE SINGAPORE MAY 6 FOR SUBIC AND GUAM. EMBASSY CONCERNED OVER CONDITIONS ABOARD SOME OF SHIPS AND POSSIBILITY SOME MIGHT NOT REACH DESTINATIONS AND THAT LIVES MAY BE LOST. IF WE ARE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR REFUGEES AT SUBIC OR GUAM, IT WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY HERE TO AVOID SEA VOYAGE AND HELP RELEASE CONGESTION SUBIC AND GUAM. EXCELLENT FACILITIES ARE AVAILABLE SINGAPORE FOR 3,000 -4,000 REFUGEES, AND BELIEVE

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GOS MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO OFF-

LOAD REFUGEES HERE IF U.S. WOULD AGREE TO AIRLIFT OUT ASAP
ALL THOSE WHO WISHED TO GO TO U.S. IF ABOVE PROPOSAL NOT ACCEP-
TABLE, REQUEST U.S. NAVY SHIP BE INSTRUCTED TO ESCORT 25 VE-
SSELS TO SUBIC. REQUIRE ANSWER TODAY. END SUMMARY.

1. GOS IS NOW IN PROCESS OF PROVIDING FUEL AND PROVISIONS TO
25 VESSELS CONTAINING 3,710 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHOSE ARRIVAL
IN SINGAPORE AREA REPORTED REF B. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED A TELE-
GRAM FROM THE MASTER OF ONE OF THESE VESSELS,
THE DAI DUONG, CARRYING 822 REFUGEES REQUESTING EMBASSY ASSIS-
TANCE IN EVACUATING ALL REFUGEES BY AIRLIFT TO U.S. TERRITORY.
TELEGRAM INDICATES MANY MEMBERS OF THE FAMILIES ON BOARD HAVE
ALREADY BEEN EVACUATED BY AMERICAN SHIPS SOME DAYS AGO FROM
VIETNAMESE WATERS. SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO REFUGEES ON OTHER
BOATS IS UNCLEAR ALTHOUGH EMBASSY ATTEMPTING TO CLARIFY.
ONE REPORT INDICATES UP TO 100 ORPHANS INCLUDED AND SOUTHERN
BAPTIST MISSION HERE HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY

FOR THEM. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT SITUATION ON SOME OF THE BOATS
MAY BE EXTREMELY CROWDED AND QUITE UNSANITARY AND THERE MAY
BE SERIOUS CASES OF ILLNESS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR AN EPIDEMIC.
FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR THAT
FOUR MORE BOATS LEFT KUANTAN YESTERDAY FOR SINGAPORE CONTAINING
232 MORE REFUGEES INCLUDING 40 WOMEN AND 132 CHILDREN, MANY OF
WHOM ARE REPORTED TO BE QUITE ILL. NAVATT IS TRYING TO OBTAIN
MORE INFO ON SEAWORTHINESS OF BOATS AND CONDITIONS ABOARD.

2. EMBASSY HAS SCRUPULOUSLY REFRAINED FROM COMMITTING USG TO
TAKE ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE REFUGEES. HOWEVER,
WE QUESTION WHETHER THIS POLICY IS STILL VALID WITH RESPECT
TO SITUATION WE ARE CONFRONTING HERE. GOS HAS ADOPTED PUBLIC
POSITION THAT REFUGEES MAY NOT COME ASHORE, AND HAS INDICATED
THAT ALL SHIPS WILL LEAVE AS SOON AS THEY ARE REPROVISIONED.
ALTHOUGH MASTER OF ONE VESSEL CARRYING 63 REFUGEES PLANS TO SAIL
TO AUSTRALIA, IT APPEARS THAT MOST OF THE OTHERS INTEND TO SAIL
TO SUBIC OR TO GUAM. WE ASSUME THAT ONCE THEY REACH THESE DES-
TINATIONS, WE WILL HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM. IF
WE ARE TO BE ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM., IT SEEMS TO
US TO MAKE A LOT MORE SENSE FOR US TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THEM HERE. IF WE LET THESE SHIPS LEAVE SINGAPORE, SOME OF
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THESE VESSELS MAY NOT MAKE IT, EPIDEMICS MAY BREAK OUT ON
BOARD AND LIVES MAY WELL BE LOST. FURTHER, THEY WOULD ADD
TO THE CONGESTION AT SUBIC AND GUAM.

3. GOS HAS EXCELLENT FACILITIES WHICH COULD HANDLE UP TO 3,000
TO 4,000 REFUGEES. BELIEVE BRITISH COULD ALSO ACCOMMODATE ANOTHER
2,000 ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED MATTER WITH BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSION. BELIEVE GOS MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO ALLOW REFUGEES

ASHORE FOR TWO OR THREE WEEKS UNTIL WE WERE ABLE TO AIRLIFT THEM TO GUAM. GOS WOULD PROBABLY INSIST, AS INDICATED REF E, THAT U.S. SEND ONE OR TWO TEAMS IN TO MANAGE THE OPERATION. WE COULD PROBABLY USE SOME ELEMENTS OF LOCAL AIR FORCE DETACHMENT AND NAVY OFFICE PERSONNEL PLUS LOCAL MISSIONARIES TO OPERATE CAMPS UNTIL TRAINED PERSONNEL ARRIVED. TO OBTAIN GOS AND UK AGREEMENT TO THIS, WE WOULD HAVE TO PROVIDE AN IRONCLAD ASSURANCE THAT WE WOULD AIRLIFT TO U.S. TERRITORY ASAP ALL THOSE WHO WISHED TO GO TO THE U.S. WE WOULD ENCOURAGE GOS TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR AS MANY AS THEY COULD REASONABLY ABSORB BUT BELIEVE GOS OFFER TO TAKE CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF REFUGEES COMING HERE (REF D) NO LONGER OPERATIVE SINCE IT WAS PROBABLY BASED ON ASSUMPTION TOTAL NUMBER REFUGEES WOULD NOT EXCEED SEVERAL HUNDRED. WE WOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE GOS TO UTILIZE ICEM AND UNHCR SERVICES, BUT TO DATE THEY HAVE SHOWN NO INCLINATION LOOK FOR HELP FROM THOSE ORGANIZATIONS. ONE OF COMPLICATING FACTORS IS THAT THE GOS PROBABLY WANTS 25 VESSELS INVOLVED TO LEAVE SINGAPORE WATERS ASAP SO THAT POTENTIAL PROBLEM WITH PRG OVER OWNERSHIP CAN BE AVOIDED (ALTHOUGH GOS OFFICIALS AT PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTED REF B SAID ALL VESSELS WERE CIVILIAN, DAO HAS INFO INDICATING SEVERAL MAY BE MILITARY.) THUS, THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT THEIR DECISION TO SEND SHIPS AND REFUGEES ON THEIR WAY IS IRREVOCABLE. WE NOTE FROM STATE DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING OF MAY 2 THAT THE PRESIDENT PLANS TO EXTEND PAROLE AUTHORITY TO COVER STRAGGLERS AND LAST MINUTE ESCAPEES WHO DO NOT QUALIFY UNDER THREE CATEGORIES ALREADY ESTABLISHED. IF THIS IS THE CASE, BELIEVE WE SHOULD ACT AT ONCE TO TRY TO GET GOS TO AGREE TO OFFLOAD THESE REFUGEES HERE.

4. IF WE ARE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS SITUATION ALONG ABOVE LINES, WE NEED DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE TODAY. IF ABOVE PROPOSAL NOT ACCEPTABLE, RECOMMEND U.S. NAVY BE INSTRUCTED TO DESIGNATE APPROPRIATE SHIP TO EXCORT 25 VESSELS TO SUBIC.

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